

## Security needs: some considerations about its integration into the Self-determination Theory (SDT)

### *Las necesidades de seguridad: algunas consideraciones sobre su integración en la Teoría de la Auto-determinación (TAD)*

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**Abstract:** According to Self-determination Theory (SDT), there are only three psychological needs - competence, autonomy and relatedness - truly fundamental and essential for human being's health and well-being, which can be satisfied by individuals while engaging in a wide variety of behaviors that may differ among individuals and be differentially manifest in different cultures. However, a number of questions have been raised about SDT's contention that there are only those three basic psychological needs. The present study discusses the possibility that the security need should be considered as a basic need and its relation to the accepted three basic psychological needs. Using the Cultural Theory framework the degree of satisfaction of the basic needs, depending on the type of culture, is also presented.

**Keywords:** Security needs, basic psychological needs, risks, self-determination, Cultural Theory.

**Resumen:** De acuerdo con la Teoría de la Autodeterminación (SDT, por sus siglas en inglés) solamente existen tres necesidades psicológicas – competencia, autonomía y asociación – verdaderamente fundamentales y esenciales para la salud y el bienestar de los seres humanos, las cuales pueden ser satisfechas por los individuos en una gran variedad de comportamientos que pueden diferir entre los individuos y manifestarse de distinta manera en diferentes culturas. Sin embargo, han surgido una serie de cuestionamientos sobre la afirmación de la Teoría de la Autodeterminación de que sólo existen esas tres necesidades básicas. El presente estudio discute la posibilidad de que la necesidad de seguridad debe ser considerada como una necesidad básica y su relación con las tres necesidades psicológicas aceptadas.

**Palabras clave:** Necesidades de seguridad, necesidades psicológicas básicas, riesgos, autodeterminación, Teoría Cultural.

## 1. Introduction

One of the most relevant theories on motivation in the last three decades is the Self-determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT is a macro-theory of motivation, personality and optimal functioning within social contexts which postulates the assumption that people are active organisms, with innate tendencies toward psychological growth and development, who strive to master ongoing challenges and to integrate their experiences into a coherent sense of self. SDT also states that this natural human tendency does not operate automatically, however, but instead requires ongoing nutriment and supports from the social environment in order to function effectively.

That is, the social context can either support or thwart the natural tendencies toward active engagement and psychological growth. Thus, it is the dia-

lectic between the active organism and the social context that is the basis for SDT's predictions about behavior, experience, and development.

SDT is not a universal need theory, but a general theory of motivation and personality. However, at the heart of the SDT is the asseveration - which has been polemical and controversial within the psychological literature – that people have three inherent basic needs. Based on numerous studies, SDT postulates that these three psychological needs are the needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon *et al.*, 2001; Reis *et al.*, 2004; Baard *et al.*, 2004). The core hypothesis is argued in the intelligence that something is a need only to the extent to which its satisfaction promotes psychological health and well-being and their thwarting undermines it. These psychological needs are innate, universal, and essential for health and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

While these statements have been the object of a vast number of researches carried out by Deci, Ryan and their colleagues, some of their critics have questioned the conclusion that those three needs are the only ones determining psychological health and well-being (Pintrich, 2003; Higgins and Kruglanski, 2000). Although it is true that the responses drawn from the results of the SDT-related research have managed to prove the veracity with regard to the efficacy of the three basic needs as determining factors for health and well-being, it is no less true that it is possible to explore the possibilities of other needs, such as, for example, the need for security, forming part of said trio.

Aside from the significance given by important researchers (Maslow, 1943) to the security need, in a certain period this need was placed near the very core of human existence (Carroll, 1969). In this work, based on the same premises considered by the SDT, we propose that security needs be considered among the basic needs, although rather being a relative than a stable factor, functioning different for the different basic needs in SDT and also for different groups and cultures, as is the case of competence, autonomy and relatedness. To reach this last objective, we will make use of the behavior of the security need analyzed under the point of view of the Cultural Theory (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982) based on risk and culture, which describes that different cultural groups see and take different kind of risks and, hence, require a different degree of security-need satisfaction.

## 2. Needs

The concept of needs is widely employed in empirical psychology to organize the study of motivation (Eccles et al., 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Weiner, 1992). Although variously defined at the physiological or psychological levels and as innate or learned, it is widely accepted that the concept of needs specified the content of motivation, which provides a substantive basis for the energization and direction of action. Thus, needs continue to be prominent in one major current motivational theory.

A *need* can be defined as a «lack of something required, useful or desired»<sup>1</sup>. Defining a need as something that is required is, however, quite different from defining a need as something that is useful, or de-

sired. If the definition is used, on the one hand, as something required for *existence*, it implies that some needs are necessary for life to be continued. Without oxygen, food or water, a human being would survive only for a relatively short time, ranging from some weeks to a few minutes.

If, in the other hand, the need is referred as something *useful* or *desired*, it is then associated with some version of the concept of *thriving* (Pittman and Zeigler, 2006). In that line of thoughts, most current social-psychological theories argue that truly basic needs are those that influence a person's well-being. In this assumption, needs specify the innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological health, growth and well-being.

This difference allows distinguishing the level of analysis at which each of the needs is assumed to operate and lead to formulate a clear distinction between existing theories, because social-psychological theories of needs are not always operating at the same level of analysis. The classical Maslow's need theory (Maslow, 1943, 1954) starts at its base with needs at the level of basic or biological processes. In addition, the need for safety and security can be considered to fall into this level of analysis, at least partially.

Security need, although needed in the sense of being required for the preservation of the existence and needed in the sense that it is at times strongly desired and clearly biologically-based, are not necessary for individual survival in the same sense as are food, water, and air.

But, «safety needs are the driving force behind our preferences for routine, our withdrawal from the unfamiliar, and our mobilization of resources in times of emergency» (Maslow, 1943). Adler (Carroll, 1969) was even more emphatic, calling security man's basic drive and adding that "it is the feeling of inferiority, inadequacy, insecurity, which determines the goal of an individual's existence" (p.25). The emphasis on this need for security is placed near the very core of human existence and demands our active attention to satisfy it.

Alderfer (1972) further expanded Maslow's hierarchy of needs by categorizing the hierarchy into his ERG theory (Existence, Relatedness and Growth). Alderfer categorized the lower order needs (physiological

<sup>1</sup> Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1963).

and safety) into the Existence category. Other more recent theories also include some basic biological needs. The survival motive and its resulting need for selfpreservation in the Terror Management Theory (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997, 2000), also operates at this level, as it does the pleasure/pain basic need in the Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory (Epstein, 1992, 1993, 1994; Epstein and Pacini, 1999). Although these theories do specify needs at the basic biological level, none of them have focused empirically on those needs.

The theories that have generated a substantial amount of empirical research have not done so at this level. That is to be expected given that these are the theories of social and personality psychologists (Pittman and Zeigler, 2006). When social-psychological theorists talk about basic human needs, they are usually not talking about basic biological needs but such things as relatedness, power, achievement or autonomy.

Essentially at the individual of analysis, McClelland (1961, 1985) proposed a content theory of motivation, which sets out a comprehensive model of human needs and motivational processes. He asserts that human motivation comprises three dominant needs: the need for achievement, the need for power and the need for affiliation. But, perhaps the theory that has generated the most extensive empirical literature, more so than any of the other theories, is Self-determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2000).

Unfortunately, the utility of the psychological need construct have been limited thus far. In part this is due to the large number of potential needs and the corresponding lack of consensus regarding those which are most central. Furthermore, there is little consensus on the criteria to use to identify needs. The problem of which needs and how many of them should be specified in the set of basic human needs is still open.

### 3. Needs in SDT

Since the time of the shift toward cognitive theories, most motivation theorists have remained unwilling to consider needs, focusing instead on goal-related efficacy. SDT has, in contrast, maintained that a full understanding of not only goal-directed behavior, but also of psychological development and well-being, cannot be achieved without addressing the needs

that give goals their psychological power and that influence which regulatory processes direct people's goal pursuits. The difference is, however, that SDT considers that these psychological needs are innate, universal, and essential for health and well-being. Specifically, in SDT, three psychological needs — competence, relatedness, and autonomy— are considered essential for understanding the *what* (i.e. content) and the *why* (i.e. process) of goal pursuits (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The aim of most SDT research has been to demonstrate (or corroborate) that people organize their behavior to satisfy those three needs (Ryan, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon *et al.*, 2001; Reis *et al.*, 2004; Baard *et al.*, 2004). The core hypothesis is postulated in the intelligence that something is a need only to the extent to which its satisfaction promotes psychological health and well-being and their thwarting undermines it (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Accordingly, a basic need whether physiological or psychological, is an energizing state that, if satisfied, leads to health and well-being; otherwise it contributes to pathology and ill-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Baard *et al.*, 2004). Thus, consistent with SDT, «needs specify innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being» (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This definition of basic needs assumes that:

- Human beings develop a fundamental trajectory toward vitality, integration, and health.
- This organismic tendency will be actualized as long as the necessary and appropriate nutrients are attainable but will give way to the emergence of nonoptimal psychological outcomes under conditions of threat or deprivation.
- All basic needs are part of the optimal development in a way that none can be thwarted or neglected without significant negative consequences.

A number of questions have been raised about Deci and Ryan's contention that there are only three basic psychological needs (Pintrich, 2003). Higgins and Kruglanski (2000) mentioned a number of other potential basic needs that may play a role in motivating people, but also noted the importance of developing criteria to determine what defines a basic need. Our proposal at this point is to analyze the possibilities of the security need being considered as a basic need. To do this, we will try to commence analyzing the re-

lation of security need with the above stated definition of basic need considered by Deci & Ryan (2000).

#### 4. Is security a basic need?

The main question here is: does security needs comply with the SDT's assertions related to basic needs? Insecurity, the dissatisfied need of security, leads to a state where neither health nor well-being can exist; on the contrary, it contributes to disease and ill-being or even may cause death. Insecurity is incompatible with vitality, integration and health; satisfaction of the security need is associated with the most effective functioning (there is no way to effectively function in a situation of insecurity); insecurity becomes salient in times of privation; the security need is part of the optimal development, therefore it cannot be neglected without significant negative consequences. Thus, it is evident that the security need meets all SDT propositions concerning basic needs. Are there situations of psychological integrity and health achievements without full satisfaction of the security need?

Some SDT-related researchers, trying to demonstrate the relevance of the three basic needs, have found interesting results concerning other needs, specifically, the security need. Sheldon *et al.* (2001) compared a set of ten eligible psychological needs in an attempt to determine which of them were truly fundamental for humans. Consistent with the SDT, Sheldon *et al.* found that competence, autonomy and relatedness were among the top four needs that subjects associated to the «most satisfying events» within their lives. Notably, it was underlined that security was among the eligible needs to reach the basic category. In relation to this finding, the authors concluded: «it appears that when things go wrong, people may strongly wish for the safety and predictability that they often take for granted» (Sheldon *et al.* 2001).

Summarizing the findings, the authors have pointed out that:

- Insecurity emerged as very salient within participants' «most unsatisfying» events and as a strong predictor of affect within such events.
- Consistent with Maslow's assumption, security needs must be taken care of before growth and positive experience can become predominant.

- Security may also be a need, which becomes salient in times of privation.

In our opinion, the fact that the security need is classified as a need associated to the «most unsatisfying» events, far from reducing its merits to be considered as a basic need, instead reinforces them. The negative consequences of insecurity, which hinder psychological (and physiological) well-being and growth, not only determine its inclusion among the basic needs, but also prioritize it. If something has to be found in order to differentiate the security need from the three accepted basic needs it is its relative character, in relation to the more stable needs of relatedness, competence and autonomy.

We cannot focus on relatedness, competence and autonomy as the needs showing a positive relation with growth and well-being without taking into account what hinders their fulfillment, i.e. insecurity. People need to feel that the value of their work is appreciated. They need to be competent. They need to satisfy the need for relatedness. They need to be autonomous. Therefore, they will respond to efforts to help them to perform better. However, they must be confident that such efforts do not put at risk their security, particularly in the industrial situation.

The conclusion «security may also be a need, which becomes salient in times of privation» (Sheldon *et al.*, 2001), led us to the assertion that in working environments security is a basic need, because adverse working conditions are found anywhere in sectors like industry or construction (Reyes & López, 2004), where «times of security privation» are usually present.

In the experiment, the need of security associated to the «most unsatisfying» events arose, spontaneously, among the participants who were college-age individuals, but it was accepted that perhaps older adults would find different kinds of greatly satisfying experiences such as self-actualization-meaning or security. The school-environment conditions in which the experiments were carried out had nothing to do with the adverse environmental conditions that are commonly found in industrial or construction sectors. However, the strength of this need is such that, regardless of these conditions, it emerged spontaneously among the students.

Finally, let's take STD's argument for selection of a need to be identified as a basic need (Deci & Ryan, 2000: 229):

*«SDT maintains that a psychological need can be identified by observing that positive psychological consequences result from conditions that allow their satisfaction and negative consequences accrue in situations that thwart it.»*

According to SDT, conditions that enable need satisfaction are related to the social context which support intrinsic motivation and facilitate internalization of extrinsic motivation (for example, and most importantly, autonomy support: specific factors in the social context, such as choice and meaningful positive feedback and the interpersonal ambience or managers' interpersonal styles) (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Security need could be identified by the same: «by observing those positive psychological consequences results from conditions (social context which support safety: safety climate, including managers' support for safety) that allows its satisfaction and negative consequences accrue in situations that thwart it (i.e. unsafe environment).

In other words, a social environment that provides satisfaction of the SDT's three basic psychological needs but fails to nurture satisfaction of the security need is not supposed to enhance effective performance (Probst & Brubaker, 2001; Marchand, Demers, & Durand, 2005; Cooper, & Phillips, 2004; Brown & Leigh, 1996), job satisfaction (Katzell, Thompson, & Guzzo, 1992; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Locke, 1976; De Wite, 1999), psychological well-being (De Wite, 1999; Parker et al., 2003) and organizational commitment (Gyekye, 2005; García, Boix, & Canosa 2004; Barling & Hutchinson, 2000).

## **5. Security need and its relation to needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness**

Need for competence refers to the tendency to feel effectiveness in one's ongoing interactions with the social environment and to experience opportunities to exercise and express one's capacities. The individual's need to be competent is closely connected with risk, and taking risks is closely associated to the concept of security need, in which the relative character of this need is implicit. Hofstede (1980) argues that the concept of competence presupposes a) a willingness to accept risk and b) a concern with performance. Stine (1997) acknowledges the importance of challenge in developing competence, but describes the balance that individuals maintain between challenge/risk and security.

Need for autonomy represents the tendency to be the perceived origin or source of one's own behavior. Individuals experience their autonomous behavior as an expression of their self and as acts emanating from their interest and integrated values. In general, autonomy is linked to activity, to making rather than being, to those higher forms of consciousness that are distinctive of human potential. Notions of creativity, of risk-taking, of responsibility are all linked conceptually to the possibility of autonomous action.

Eccles (Parsons) and her colleagues (1983) identified «cost» as a critical component of subjective task values (Eccles [Parsons] et al., 1983; Eccles, 1987). Cost is conceptualized in terms of the negative aspects of engaging in the task, such as performance anxiety and fear of failure and success as well as the amount of effort needed to succeed. It also is defined in terms of the lost opportunities that result from making one choice rather than another. Of course, evaluation of the cost of engaging the task, in spite of the amount of environmental autonomous support, is associated with taking risks i.e. be insecure.

Relatedness refers to the need to be connected with others. This need was added to the theory after the other two, and reflects Deci and Ryan's beliefs that individuals must have strong connections to others for optimum development to occur. SDT hypothesizes that intrinsic motivation will be more likely to flourish in contexts characterized by a sense of secure relatedness (Ryan & La Guardia, 2000): a secure relational base appears to provide a needed backdrop for intrinsic motivation, a sense of security that makes the expression of this innate growth tendency more likely and more robust. From this, we can state that the problem of security is basically a problem of human relationship. There is a strong connection between relatedness and security.

The idea that relatedness is important for intrinsic motivation is also implicit in Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1970, 1973, 1980). During infancy, intrinsic motivation is observable as exploratory behavior, and attachment theorists suggested that exploration is more robust when infants are securely attached to a parent. Studies of mothers and their young children show that maternal autonomy also supports the security of attachment presumed to be fostered by it (Bretherton, 1987). Secure attachment is associated with an internalized sense of lovability, of being worthy of care, of being effective in eliciting care

when required, and a sense of personal efficacy in dealing with most stressors independently.

The feelings of security related to secure attachment are strongly associated with the fulfillment of the individual's security need provided by parents. Based upon Bowlby's attachment theory, the focus on attachment rests upon two attachment styles, secure and insecure, with insecure attachment styles encompassing various subtypes. An individual who possesses a *secure attachment* style often views their world as *safe and/or protected*; whereas an individual who possesses an *insecure attachment* style often views their world as *unsafe and/or dangerous*. Both situations are well related to the future individual's attitude about taking risks and thus, with the satisfaction of security needs.

This, in turn, will affect the needs of competence and autonomy. Seeing the world as an unsafe and/or dangerous place entails blocks in assuming risks such as: fear of failure, fear of being rejected, fear of being incompetent, unwillingness to accept possible negative consequences of one's actions, belief that one is inadequate or incompetent to handle the situation, a need to play it safe, in short, a great need for security. To possess a secure attachment style implies having permission to grow, to change, to take risks, to rise up.

Hence, security need is the assured fulfillment of the other basic needs. It is the constant intent to satisfy the needs. It summarizes and emphasizes the importance of the needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy.

## 6. Culture and risks

One of the major assumptions that underlie cross-cultural social psychology is that culture shapes human behavior (Brislin, 2000). In fact, in many well-developed models of social behavior, cultural factors (norms, practices) are understood as the principle antecedents of individual behavior, shaping values, self, and motivation of individuals. Different cultures engender different goals, motives, and values, and these, in turn, are assumed to be differentially associated with how one pursues and attains well-being and

social integration (Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

Social contexts catalyze both intrapersonal and interpersonal differences in motivation and personal growth, resulting in people being more self-motivated, energized, and integrated in some situations, domains, and cultures than in others. Research on the conditions that foster as opposed to undermining positive human potentials has both theoretical and practical significance because it can contribute not only to formal knowledge of the causes of human behavior but also to the design of social environments that optimize people's development, performance, and well-being.

Presently, there are many theoretical approaches that can be used for analyzing and explaining differences in social and political contexts of different societies. One such approach is the neo-Durkheimian<sup>2</sup> 'theory of socio-cultural viability' or as it is commonly termed, 'grid-group Cultural Theory' (GG-CT) or, simply, Cultural Theory. It is based on the presumption that different societies feared different sorts of threats, and that these differences corresponded to differences in their social structure. In *Risk and Culture*, Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky stated the provocative basic thesis that concern about risks is a result of patterns of social organization (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982).

There has been a gradually increasing approval for the fact that risk perception is a social phenomenon which cannot be studied in isolation (Boholm, 1996). Since most humans are social beings, it is natural to consider the social context of a person when considering his or her perception of risk. Because risk perception does not occur in a social vacuum one cannot account for how people perceive and understand risks without also considering the social contexts. According to Mary Douglas (1978) what is perceived as dangerous, and how much risk to accept, is a function of one's cultural adherence and social learning.

Such asseverations are described by Mary Douglas (1978), Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) and Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky (1990), which have been important contributions to the discussion on risk per-

<sup>2</sup> The Cultural Theory framework is based on a model whose roots are found in Emile Durkheim's work on the sociology of religion that outlined the way society shapes individuals' thinking. According to Durkheim, people form their ideas about God based on the cohesiveness of the society. Individual action is based on values and beliefs, which are in turn defined by the institutional form of organization. See: Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (1912, English translation by Joseph Swain: 1915), The Free Press, 1965.

ception and risk interpretations. Yet it has also attracted critics, who allege that for all its theoretical appeal, it lacks any empirical basis Sjöberg (2003). But demonstrations of Cultural Theory's validity have been pitched mainly at the theoretical level. Indeed, some Cultural Theory proponents explicitly deny the relevance of empirical «tests» to a theory located within the interpretive tradition (Tansey 2004a, 2004b; Adams 1995).

Palmer (1996) reported that the explanatory power of cultural theory was high. Cultural theory aims to explain how people perceive and act upon the world around them. More specifically, the theory claims that this is largely determined by social aspects and cultural adherence. Depending on whether one is socially participative and which groups one belongs to, one will focus on different kinds of risks. People choose what to fear and how much to fear it. The form of assuming risks is, of course, associated with the level of action of the security need.

The basis of Culture Theory is Douglas' grid-group typology (Douglas, 1978; Thompson *et al.*, 1990). According to Douglas, variation in social participation can be adequately accounted for by the dynamics between the two dimensions *group* and *grid*. The *grid* dimension refers to the acceptance of the legitimacy of external prescriptions and the *group* dimension refers to the extent individuals are bound in groups. From this, the four-field typology of social relations was born and the resulting four ways of life or cultures, depicted in Figure 1.

High grid			
Low group	Fatalism	Hierarchy	High group
	Individualism	Egalitarianism	
Low grid			

Figure 1  
**Grid-Group Cultural Theory Model**

*Individualists.* They assert that the primary value is freedom, and that unfettered competition between self-interested and formally equal individuals is the best way to let talent rise to the top and earn its deserved rewards. Individualists consider themselves to be the masters of their own destinies and they are pragmatic materialists. When things go wrong, individualists blame personal incompetence. Networks

are created, maintained and utilized by individualists seeking personal materialistic gain and respect, based on merit and competence. Risk is perceived as an opportunity – without risk, there would be no possibilities for gain.

*Egalitarians.* They have an immense feeling of common cause and equality. There are no formal rules, but members are closely aligned. When things go wrong, the egalitarians blame the system since they reject authority. Natural resources are limited and overexploited by the system. Egalitarians are not risk-takers; they view nature as unforgiving.

*Hierarchists.* They are strictly bound by order and are committed to the cause. This way of life is characterized by high group membership and many external constraints. The managing institutions should regulate and minimize unusual occurrences. When things go wrong, hierarchists blame no one (blame shedding) or they blame deviants. Hence, hierarchists accept risk as long as decisions about these are justified by the government or experts. Risks are to be considered, but they are manageable, and experts within the system are to be trusted.

*Fatalists.* They are heavily regulated, with their time and routines dictated to them. But they feel no real motivation to participate within the creation of those regulations; they are fragmented, and wish to be left alone. This way of life is characterized by low group membership and many external constraints. When things go wrong, fatalists blame fate and bad luck. Risk taking is viewed as unnecessary since there are no possibilities for gain. The preferred strategy is avoidance of risk taking.

The above essentially synthesizes the characteristics of the basic grid-group typology of social solidarities, or cultures. These elements are summarized in Table 1. The manifest variability in values and behaviors across different cultures has led many theorists interested in personality and well-being to adopt cultural relativism as an approach to understanding what fosters well-being. In this view, different cultures engender different goals, motives, and values, and these, in turn, are assumed to be differentially associated with how one pursues and attains well-being and social integration (Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). In particular, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) argues that people from all cultures share basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Table I  
Characteristics of the four-field typology of social relations proposed by Culture Theory

Strategic behavior	Individualistic	Egalitarian	Hierarchist	Fatalist <sup>3</sup>
Primary value	Freedom	Equality	Order	Survival
Position related to Risk	- Opportunity - Love to take risks - Risks are a possibility for gain	- Precaution - Don't like to take risks - Risks are a menace	- Manageable - Don't like to take risks - Risks are under control	- Indifferent - Don't like to take risks - Risks are unnecessary to take
Group membership	Low	High	High	Low
Orientation	Competence	Consensus	Authority	Luck
Public Management Mode	Choice-ism	Group-ism	Boss-ism	Chance-ism
Policy based on	Interests	Values	Structure	Survival
Perception of politics	«I decide what I want to do»	«We decide what we want to do»	«We decide what they must do»	«They decide what I must do»
Relations	Many and loose	Many and tight	Few and tight	Few and loose

## 7. SDT's basic needs and Cultural Theory

According to SDT, the three psychological basic needs can be satisfied while engaging in a wide variety of behaviors that may differ among individuals and be differentially manifest in different cultures. But in any case their satisfaction is essential for the healthy development and well-being of all individuals regardless of culture (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Again, questions have been raised about the universality of those three basic needs and whether they operate similarly in different cultures (Pintrich, 2003). For instance, in cultures defined as less individualistic and more egalitarian does the need for autonomy take on the same importance? This question is currently the focus of a great deal of research (Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004).

To answer that question, SDT postulates that within every culture, environmental norms and practices are assimilated or internalized by members of this culture to varying degrees, assuming that all cultural practices are learned through the various processes of socialization. But the learned norms and practices acquire motivational power only if people internalize the meanings, values, sensibilities, and regulations that govern these norms and practices. Values and practices are also expected to be most easily inte-

grated when they support the satisfaction of universal psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, values and practices may be differentially manifest in different cultures. Chirkov *et al.* (2003) showed that behaviors reflecting various cultural orientations are internalized to different degrees by members of diverse cultures.

In their four-country study, Chirkov *et al.* (2003) found that particularly vertical cultural practices, which focus on deference to authority (hierarchical), unquestioned following of tradition and competition (Triandis, 1996), were, on average, less well internalized in comparison with horizontal practices (egalitarian), which reflect equal rights and respect for all individuals.

Chirkov *et al.* (2003) interpreted that finding as suggesting that whereas horizontal orientations represent cultural forms that can readily support basic psychological needs, vertical relations can frequently pose conflict for need fulfillment and thus tend to be anchored by more controlling forms of internalization such as introjection or external regulation. SDT also suggests that well-being results from conditions that foster an integration of cultural values within the individual, an integration that is experienced as autonomous functioning.

<sup>3</sup> The relation between fatalism and risk perception has received limited attention from researchers (Marris, Langford & O'Riordan, 1998), but Rippl (2002) tested all four worldviews and found the dimension to be important.



In other work, Chirkov *et al.* (2005) found that horizontal practices also appear to be associated with more positive well-being than vertical cultures. The different degrees of internalization of cultural practices and the degree that those characteristics of each type culture supports basic psychological needs, as well as how well-being is attained are presented in Table 2.

As has been mentioned, self-determination theory argues that people from all cultures share basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. But it also suggests that any type of cultural practice can be engaged in more or less autonomously, more or less relatedness-ly and more or less competitively, whether it be, individualistic, egalitarian, or hierarchistic (Inghilleri, 1999; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Sheldon, *et al.*, 2001).

This fact is also shown in Table 2, where the three basic needs appear in all types of cultural formations (except in the Fatalist, due to the almost non-existence of studies regarding this type of culture), but with different positions with regard to their manifestation. They have been placed in order of importance for each cultural formation. For example, in an individualist culture, competence (++) and autonomy (++) are the most relevant whilst relatedness (-), the least. In contrast, for the egalitarian, relatedness (++) appears to be the most salient, followed by autonomy (+) with competence (-) being the least. Finally, for

the hierarchists, competence (++) is the most important, followed by relatedness (+) and finally, autonomy.

In conclusion, we can assume that, although the satisfaction of the three psychological needs is essential for the healthy development and well-being of all individuals regardless of culture, the degree of their satisfaction *will depend on cultural factors* such as norms and practices, determined by the type of culture, which in turn are related to the extent to which environmental norms and practices are assimilated or internalized by members of this culture.

### 7.1. Security need and Cultural Theory

Security needs follow the same pattern as SDT's basic needs. In spite of their universal nature, security needs are also different for different groups and are manifested differently, depending on the culture model. According to Wildavsky and Dake (1990:42) the cultural theory of risk can «predict and explain what kind of people will perceive which potential hazards to be how dangerous.» Wildavsky and Dake sums up the cultural theory by stating that individuals are active organizers of their own perceptions, who choose what to fear and how much to fear it. As the perception of risk is linked to the security need (Storseth 2007; Torbjorn & Iversen, 2007), this permits establishing the risk-security need relation shown in Table 3.

Table 2  
Different degrees of internalization of cultural practices

Strategic behavior	Individualistic	Egalitarian	Hierarchist
Type of culture	Vertical <sup>4</sup>	Horizontal	Vertical
Support of self-determination basic needs	+	+	–
Internalization	+	+	–
Well-being	+	+	–
Degree of satisfaction of the basic needs	Competence ++ Autonomy ++ Relatedness –	Relatedness ++ Autonomy + Competence –	Competence ++ Relatedness + Autonomy –

<sup>4</sup> Although we have classified here individualistic as a kind of vertical culture, Triandis (1995, 2001) has identified two types of individualistic cultures: horizontal individualism (HI-uniqueness), where people strive to be unique and do their own thing and vertical individualism (VI-achievement oriented) where people not only want to do their own thing but also strive to be the very best. But this distinction does not affect the purpose of classification presented in Table 2. The concept of horizontality is not the same in the individual type culture that in egalitarian cultures.

Tabla 3  
Relationship risk-security need in different types of cultures

Way of life	Individualistic	Egalitarian	Hierarchist	Fatalist
Position related to Risk	- Opportunity - Love to take risks - Risks are a possibility for gain	- Precaution - Don't like to take risks - Risks are a menace	- Manageable - Don't like to take risks - Risks are under control	- Isolation - Don't like to take risks - Risks are unnecessary to take
Security need	Low	High	High	High

It is unquestionable that in individualistic-type cultures, characterized by risk taking (without risk, there would be no possibilities for gain), the magnitude of the satisfaction of the security need is lower than in other types of culture. The possible insecurity that goes with risk taking has less force in comparison with the advantages provided by taking them. This situation does not affect the consideration of the universality of the security need, as with the little need to satisfy relatedness in this type of culture it does not affect its individualistic characteristic. In both cases, its little magnitude responds to the characteristics of the culture type, to the norms and practices that determine them.

In other types of culture (egalitarian, hierarchist and fatalist) the security need, starting from its position with respect to risks, becomes much more evident, although the motives that move them are different. Egalitarians consider risks as a threat to their system; hierarchists consider that risks should be kept under control and fatalists think that it is not necessary to take risks, but it is better to avoid them. In all cases, however, the security need predominates over risk taking.

## 8. Conclusions

An exhaustive review of the SDT-related research shows us the innumerable studies and experiments carried out with the intention of demonstrating that human beings only have three basic psychological needs which are innate, universal and essential for health and well-being: the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness<sup>5</sup>. The results obtained, always successful in that intention, have, nevertheless, been subject to controversies and polemics, one of the elements considered being the possible existence of other potential basic needs hitherto not re-

searched which may play a role in providing health and well-being.

Works such as those of Sheldon et al. (2001), whose purpose was to examine 10 types of needs which are candidates for being a basic need, are very scarce. Curiously, however, despite the fact that this work also corroborated the three needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness as the most relevant, it provided important considerations related with the security need. It is verified that the security need meets the definition adopted by SDT to be considered a basic need. The analysis of the relation of security need with the other three basic needs shows the relevance of the need for relatedness in the possible behavior of the individuals to risk assumption, a decisive element, furthermore, in configuring the strength of the needs for autonomy and competence.

Based on the theory of attachment, an individual who possesses a *secure attachment* style often views their world as *safe and/or protected*; whereas an individual who possesses an *insecure attachment* style often views their world as *unsafe and/or dangerous*. Both situations are well related to the future individual's attitude about taking risks and thus, with the satisfaction of security needs, of autonomy and competence.

Different cultures engender different goals, motives, and values, and these, in turn, are assumed to be differentially associated with how one pursues and attains well-being and social integration. Cultural Theory, a theory of socio-cultural viability, states that depending on whether one is socially participative and which groups one belongs to, one will focus on different kinds of risks. People choose what to fear and how much to fear it (related, on a personal level, as mentioned above, to the type of attachment style they possess) and this fact correlates with dif-

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/publications/index.html>

ferences in their social structures. Therefore, Cultural Theory assumes a four-field typology of social relations with the resulting four ways of life or cultures: individualistic, egalitarian, hierarchical and fatalistic.

Self-determination theory argues that people from all cultures share basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, but with environmental norms and practices related to a specific culture assimilated or internalized by members of this culture to varying degrees, assuming that all cultural practices are learned through the various processes of socialization. Vertical cultural practices, which focus on deference to authority (hierarchical), unquestioned following of tradition, and competition, are, on average, less well internalized compared to horizontal practices (egalitarian), which reflect equal rights and respect for all individuals.

The same template complies with regard to the security need. It is unquestionable that in individualistic-type cultures, characterized by risk taking, the magnitude of the satisfaction of the security need is lower than in other types of culture. The possible insecurity that goes with risk taking has less force in comparison with the advantages provided by taking them. This situation does not affect the consideration of the universality of the security need, as with the little need to satisfy relatedness in this type of culture, it does not affect its individualistic characteristic. In both cases, its little magnitude responds to the characteristics of the culture type, to the norms and practices that determine them.

Although it is necessary to perform research which makes it possible to more accurately conclude the inclusion of the security need in the category of basic needs proposed by the SDT, the aspects analyzed in the present work makes it possible to conclude *a priori* that it meets all the requirements to be considered a basic need. Much work remains to be done. Differences in theoretical structure, levels of analysis, and the set of basic human needs will need to be addressed.

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